

Study: Smelling farts may be good for your health

The next time someone at your office lets out a "silent but deadly" emission, maybe you should thank them. A new study at the University of Exeter in England suggests that exposure to hydrogen sulfide — a.k.a. what your body produces as bacteria breaks down food, causing gas — could prevent mitochondria damage. Yep, the implication is what you're thinking: People are taking the research to mean that smelling farts could prevent disease and even cancer.

The study, published in the *Medicinal Chemistry Communications* journal, found that hydrogen sulfide gas in rotten eggs and flatulence could be a key factor in treating diseases.

"Although hydrogen sulfide gas is well known as a pungent, foul-smelling gas in rotten eggs and flatulence, it is naturally produced in the body and could in fact be a healthcare hero with significant implications for future therapies for a variety of diseases," Dr. Mark Wood, a professor at the University of Exeter, said in a statement.

While hydrogen sulfide gas is harmful in large doses, the study suggests that "a whiff here and there has the power to reduce risks of cancer, strokes, heart attacks, arthritis, and dementia by preserving mitochondria," *Time* reports.

Dr. Matt Whiteman, a University of Exeter professor who worked on the study, said in a statement that researchers are even replicating the natural gas in a new compound, AP39, to reap its health benefits. The scientists are delivering "very small amounts" of AP39 directly into mitochondrial cells to repair damage, which "could hold the key to future therapies," the university's statement reveals.

You'll have to decide for yourself, though, whether exposure to hydrogen sulfide in flatulence is worth the potential health benefits.

- - Meghan DeMaria